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Turkey: USCIRF Calls for Thorough Investigation into Journalist's Killing

WASHINGTON- The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom condemns the killing in Istanbul on Friday of Mr. Hrant Dink, a well-known journalist and editor whom the Commission met on its recent visit to Turkey. The Commission extends its sincere condolences to Mr. Dink's family.

"The Commission is profoundly saddened by the news of Mr. Dink's murder," said Felice D. Gaer, chair of the Commission. "Mr. Dink was a courageous journalist who fought for and defended freedom of expression in his country. We commend the swift and unequivocal statement of Prime Minister Erdogan denouncing this horrendous act and vowing to pursue the person or persons responsible. We urge that the investigation be thorough, transparent, and credible."

Mr. Dink, a Turkish citizen of Armenian ethnicity, had been convicted under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code of insulting the Turkish state, because of his use of the term "Armenian genocide" in his public remarks and written publications. His conviction was converted to a suspended sentence following European Union and other international pressure. Dink wrote in one of his newspaper columns that he had received anonymous death threats. He told members of the Commission on their recent visit to Turkey that he continued to receive numerous death threats in the face of his discussion of issues of religious and political freedom considered by the Turkish state to be controversial.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Felice D. Gaer

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